

Gurmat:

Role of Sangat and Sant in the Panth

Yuktanand Singh

Gurmat:

Role of Sangat and Sant in the Panth

Yuktanand Singh

Sadh Sangat and Shabad Guru, these two are important pillars of the Panth. Guru Ji has said, "Have friendship with a Gurmukh, and set your heart on the true Guru" (1421:5). This is our staple in our spiritual journey on this earth. These days, we have the Shabad as our Guru, but we seem to be losing the art of Sadh Sangat. So, here is an article on this difficult and touchy subject.

I have been reluctant to post it because I do not have the time to keep up with discussions and I find myself quite inadequate, just like a fish trying to climb up a tree. But, considering the continued confusion and controversy generated by the so-called saints sprouting everywhere, I have decided to post it.

Please excuse its length. It is divided into six sections. It is difficult to be cognizant of various contentions and

still keep it short and free of redundancy. An effort is made to keep it within the tenets of Gurmat. Please offer correction of mistakes.

Section I

During the time of Guru Nanak, there was a Gurmukh who, in his Dharamsal, would serve every holy man passing through his village. He asked all these holy men the same question, "What is the benefit of meeting or serving the Sant or a Sadhu?" Everyone said that one is blessed with happiness, riches, health, long life, children, etc. but being a Gurmukh, he was not satisfied with their answer.

One day he met Guru Nanak and asked him this question. Guru Nanak, instead of explaining it, told him to go in the jungle early in the morning, sit below a certain tree and repeat 'Waheguru' for some time. The Gurmukh did exactly as he was told. He noticed a pair of crows sitting on the tree. While he was sitting there they had transformed into white cranes. But he felt that he still did not receive the answer to his question.

So Guru Nanak told him to repeat the same the next day.

Next day he noticed that these white cranes turned into swans. He still did not see the answer to his question. So Guru Ji told him to go back. Next morning, while sitting and reciting 'Waheguru' he observed that pair of swans transform into humans. They came and sat close to him.

Gurmukh asked them the question also. The pair explained that they were born as crows but upon meeting the Gurmukh, they became cranes, upon meeting him again, they became swans, and then humans. Upon meeting a Sadhu, within the course of three days they were blessed with what would have otherwise taken several lifetimes.

(The above was paraphrased from 'Divine Mystic Reflections on Gurmat' p. 183)

Recently, while strolling in a state of spiritual reflection, I saw a pair of crows, and I remembered the incident above. As I approached the crows they flew away the instant they saw me. But they soon returned. Still as crows.

What are the lessons to be learned here? Here are some choices:

1. Such supernatural phenomena occurred only during the time of the Gurus, not today.॥
2. The pair of crows that returned could be a different pair, not the same that flew away.॥
3. I am not a Gurmukh. Therefore, it was foolish of me to expect similar results.॥
4. Sitting early in the morning and repeating 'Waheguru' would yield a better outcome.॥
5. The actual process is much subtler than how it is symbolically presented in those books.॥
6. Meeting Guru Nanak accelerated the process, so that the Gurmukh learns the lesson quickly.॥
7. The desire to meet a Gurmukh had turned this Sikh into a Gurmukh, worthy of Darshan himself.॥
8. Spiritual people teach by example and they avoid arguments and elaborate explanations.॥
9. Before the advent of Sangat, Dharamsals and Teerath (pilgrimage) facilitated meeting holy people.॥

10. Truth is always the same. Thus, regardless, the lesson applies to us just as much today as it did then.

In my opinion, the correct choice is all of the above, except the first one.

Let us see why meeting a Gurmukh is so important and what is the significance of Sat Sangat. Sikh Panth is a living Panth. Do we understand what makes it a living path; is it the ordinary Sikhs or a Gurmukh like the one in the episode above? What makes this Panth different and superior than all the religions? Which ingredients assure its survival, undiluted and unadulterated, for the future generations? Most of us would say, Gurbani. But in my opinion, it is the implementation of Gurbani. Not to mention the Khalsa Rehit, but that is a separate subject.

Gurbani lists Sangat as essential to living a normal life as a human (427:6). Sat Sangat is just as important as reading Gurbani, because it transforms our heart so that we can truly understand the message of Gurbani (1316:6-8). We need to examine ourselves: is the Sangat working for us in this sense? If not, why not? Do we understand what Sat Sangat means? Does a crowd

of people like us represent Sat Sangat? Does the company of others just like us, adequately fulfill all the conditions of being in the Sadh Sangat? In other words, what is the role of a Sadh or a Sant in Sikh Panth?

Section II

The meaning of Sadh or Sant: The English word 'Saint' does not mean the same as the 'Sant' in Gurbani. The former commonly means someone canonized by the church or the Vatican, while a Sikh Saint or Sant is someone who has achieved spiritual perfection and mastery over the personal self through Guru's mercy. Being the most humble person on earth, a Sant lives without any regard to recognition by people or by a religious body.

A Sant is an extremely rare soul (1123:3). This should not discourage us, confuse us, or cloud our understanding that Sant is the model of a perfect Sikh, the person that Gurbani urges us to become. As Guru Ji says, "The season comes over and over, but a seed germinates only if it were whole" (468:17), in order to understand Gurmat properly, we must remember that

Sikh Panth is an inner journey, a path of Bhakti or Divine love. Without this insight, we can gain only a fragmented understanding of Gurmat.

A Sant is someone who is devoted only to God and always lives in God's presence. Gurbani emphasizes upon company of a Sant as an essential, so we can learn the correct way (e.g., 999:12, 622:1, 610:7-12). Obviously, these verses are of little value to those who are not mystically inclined, and most people are not. To them, Sant is, at best, an idyllic dream of perfection, a state unattainable in the real world. It is difficult to interpret Gurmat and make it palatable to the masses as well.

Panth thrives only on account of those few Gursikhs who quietly practice the edict 'Guru Granth and Guru Panth' in the real sense. Others attempt to reinterpret Gurbani to make it fit us just as we are, as if we, the ordinary and ignorant Sikhs constitute 'Guru Panth' and that we do not need to seek someone better and more advanced than us. As a result, instead of aspiring to realize these supreme goals, seeking and respecting our venerated Sikhs, and striving to follow Gurbani as it was meant to be followed, we have succeeded only

in lowering its high standards down to the level of our own mediocrity and stolidity. For example, we delegate the recital of our Guru's Bani to paid singers and CD players. Then we wonder what went wrong. This is sad.

Our greatest foes are not outside. They are living among us. At one extreme are those teachers who misrepresent Gurmat. In an apparent effort to save us from the charlatans, they shroud and suppress our need to adore perfect Gursikhs as our role models, by distorting the meaning in Gurbani. At the other extreme, people revere some individuals as a Guru, when Guru Ji makes it clear that only Shabad, not a person, is the Guru. We also see people creating division in the Sangat, on the basis of which Sant which Jatha or which Dera is genuine. Such acts should be declared off limits in the Panth, because all such acts create splinter groups, destroying our unity. Panth is meant to be a family of humans following one God under the umbrella of Gurbani and Sadh Sangat, not under some person or some religion.

So, what would a Sant look like today? With the institution of Sangat, the Panj Piyare, and with the

rules laid down for the Khalsa Panth, if followed correctly, Guru Ji has eliminated all danger from impostors. We submit only to the Panj Piyare in the physical form of the Guru, Guru Granth Ji in the spiritual form, and we seek the company of a Sant in the Sangat, not in someone who claims to be a Sant. Those who claim to be a Guru or a Sant, leading the Sikhs away from mainstream Panth, are the ones we need to worry about. Additionally, we must avoid those teachers who disregard the Rehit prescribed by the tenth Master. Today's Sikh Sant is a Gursikh who keeps the Rehit of Khalsa, and someone who would not lead people into joining a 'Jatha' or a 'Dera' and thus, would not engage in fragmentation of the mainstream Sangat.

It is imperative that every Sikh learns to be responsible and not promote someone living as, a Sant. As we know, a "Puran Gursikh" (perfect Sikh) would be an acceptable designation of a Gursikh living today whom we may respect and revere. Ignoring this simple but important rule is, in a way, defiance of the institution of the Panj Piyare. Such acts contradict Guru Ji's goal to eliminate our differences and to unite us, nay, to unite the entire world some day.

Section III

How is a Sant produced? Sri Naranjan Singh Ji used to say that, just as an almond has a kernel and a shell, the same way, Naam (Waheguru hidden inside everyone and everywhere) is the kernel, everything else (including religion, theology, and philosophy) is just the shell.

Only the moments lived with this truth in our heart are worthwhile. Those rare individuals who seek the kernel, the essence, and through Guru's mercy, never turn their attention away from it, become perfect and they are known as a Sant (319:18, 1425:2-3).

All our acts, breathing, sitting, getting up and taking bath during the Amrit Vela, Simran, Nitnem, putting food in our mouth, thinking, interaction with others, experiencing pleasure or pain, everything is judged in the light of whether we have been true to this eternal law of Naam (463:16). However, mostly we stay oblivious towards it, being busy all our life mistaking the shell for the kernel. Except for that rare individual called Sant, we all vacillate, and thus, we remain

imperfect and keep falling off the path. Being in dust from the feet of Sat Sangat, we can learn how to maintain a balance on this path (1263:7, 1065:2).

Unlike any other scripture, Gurbani, page after page, dwells upon the kernel. Gurbani does not belong to any particular religion. Shabads related to the essence, i.e., Naam Sant and Guru, are the least understood, and also the most difficult to explain. This is because of our own limitations. As Guru Ji says, only a Brahmgyani can understand a Brahmgyani (273:16), or only a Sant understands the glory of Naam (265:6). Nevertheless, it is imperative that we understand their importance in our life.

We could cite several hundred pages of Gurbani regarding importance of Sadh Sangat, and the Sant. On the average, the words Sant Sadh HarJan or Jan appear twice or more on each page. Only the words, 'Gurmukh' 'Guru' 'Naam' and various names used for God, exceed their frequency in Gurbani. In the Bani of Sukhmani Sahib, besides numerous other references to Sant and Jan, three complete Ashtpadi's (chapters) are devoted to this topic alone. It should be obvious that an insight into its meaning, and more importantly,

its application is absolutely vital to our understanding of Gurmat and to succeed as a Sikh.

Notwithstanding the prevalence of frauds and fakes, further compounded by an extreme rarity of a genuine Sant, a perfect Gursikh always lives somewhere. Some individuals would proudly display their derision of anyone called a Sant. This is unfortunate. A threat of deceit and abuse does not justify rejection of the institution of Sangat and its product, the Gurmukh or Sant. The charlatans have been always with us. During the time of the Ninth Master, there were 22 such individuals claiming to be the Guru, in just one small town of Bakala. Among people without any spiritual discipline, anyone with a little mental concentration and some knowledge of Gurbani can easily pass as the greatest Sant.

Let us understand at least this, Sant is a rare soul, extremely difficult to find, and a Sant would not claim to be a Sant. The rest of these "Sants" and "Gurus" are, at best, just a little more advanced and clever than the masses around them, and in fact, if they claim to be a Sant, they do more damage than any good they may seem to accomplish.

The terms, Sikh, Gursikh, Brahmgyani, Gurmukh, Jan or HariJan, Mahapurush, Sadh, and Sant, are the names given to Sikhs at various spiritual stages. The Sant is a sacred and supreme state recognized within the Panth.

The prevalent abuse of this term, along with widespread ignorance of what it stands for, has degraded its meaning for the masses today. This makes some scholars to even suggest that 'Sant' is just a metaphor, used only for Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Gurus, or God. This version could be acceptable if it had been indeed used sparingly, as a metaphor, not repeated on every page of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Most of Gurbani is simple, composed in the languages of that era. Confusing us with metaphors is clearly, not the aim of Gurbani. Gurbani also refers to Sant in the present tense. Thus, while Gurbani is quite unambiguous that Sant is a person, a Sant must also be alive and well.

Section IV

How do we find a Sant? The characteristics of a Sant are described in Gurbani. But the public is critically deficient in this knowledge, because, any reference to this word is regarded with great suspicion. This facilitates only a widespread ignorance to flourish unimpeded, and the Sikh masses remains confused about the significance of meeting genuine Gursikhs or a genuine Sant.

Nevertheless, this topic will continue to emerge, because Gurbani stresses upon company of a Sant as being indispensable. Since the establishment of Sat Sangat, we no longer wander in search of such an individual and we no longer follow someone who claims to be a Sant. Sadh Sangat is the place to be. Nevertheless, we must have a burning desire to be uplifted through company of such Gursikhs (1424:6-10) then Guru takes care of the rest. This is Guru's promise (e.g. page 204).

Unfortunately, as they say, "When someone talks to God, we call it a prayer; but when God talks to someone, we call it schizophrenia." People may sing the Shabads idolizing the Sant and Sangat with utmost reverence, but they do not hesitate to denounce every

Sant they will ever hear of. Something is seriously wrong here. As Guru Ji says, "Reach first for the root cause of disease" (450:14), before we can solve our internal problems, we need to remedy our lack of faith in the Panth, its garden, Sat Sangat, and its fruit, the Sant.

Forgive me for repeating something we already know: without Gurbani there can be no Sat Sangat or Sadh Sangat (731:9, 160:6, 427:5). Shabad-Avatar, Gurbani, the living Guru, is an expression of God's love and it represents God Himself (1226:3, 515:17). Gurbani instructs us, so that we are honest with ourselves, with others, and with God. Gurbani implants the spiritual truth in our heart, often during those rare moments when we are absorbed in Kirtan, especially in Sadh Sangat (642:7).

Someone may ask, "But, don't we know this already?" Let us see. We say Sangat represents the Guru, but our conduct shows that we do not really believe in it. Even those, who come to Gurudwara with a sincere desire to connect with Gurbani, sit with an inner disregard for the Sangat when, in fact, Sangat is the catalyst to connect us with the Guru. Most Sikhs today read the

Gurbani verses regarding Sant with a resigned apathy. This is a testament of serious deficiency in our faith, akin to someone coming to an orchard but without an anticipation to find any fruit in there. In other words, we bow to the Guru but do not really believe in what the Guru says. A deficiency of this magnitude bears equally grave results.

It should be no surprise to us that our problems continue. We lack direction, and quibble like children lacking adult supervision. Granted that, Bani with its Divine radiance continues to keep us spiritually intrigued. Kirtan of Gurbani in Sadh Sangat is meant to convert indolent masses into spiritual giants. However, it cannot do much for those who, implicitly, have no faith in its outcome, that Sant is a real person. We may sing and read Gurbani all our life, but without faith, our inner progress remains stunted.

We know that Guru's Darshan is in Gurbani and it is revealed through Sangat. However, Gurbani can be only as good to us as our own faith in its teaching. As a first step, we must help each other in the Sangat by being absorbed in Gurbani with a sincere desire to be uplifted by the Sangat around us. Perhaps, this

phenomenon of mutual spiritual support in Sangat needs to be studied further. Additionally, Sadh Sangat or company of perfect Sikhs is essential to learning the proper inner spiritual conduct. Gurbani stresses upon Sangat as an important step towards inner perfection, just as, one lamp lights another.

We say Shabad is the Guru and that we receive everything from Gurbani. But, let us not forget that this is so only if we also obey, what Gurbani commands (982:10-11). Worshipping Gurbani but not doing what it says is just like someone worshipping a prescription but not taking the medicine prescribed therein. That would be just another form of idolatry. Rather, to feel satisfied with mere recitation of Gurbani and the rituals, without closeness to some perfect Gursikh some time in our life, is contrary to what Gurbani exhorts (e.g., 905:12, 204:5-8, 271:5-272:10).

Gurbani also teaches us that there is no need to worship such Sikhs. The mere sight of a Sant is uplifting. Our eyes will betray the peace and dispassionate contentment that our soul regains in their company. Singing Gurbani with them is the way to liberation (1208:13-15, 898:8-13).

But first, through God's mercy, we need that burning desire to see them. Only then, can we benefit from their company or recognize them. To a Sant, Gurbani is alive, and the Sant has fallen in love with it. This rubs off on us. Gurbani, then, takes a bright new meaning. This is the sign of true Sadh Sangat. Then we can see how Gurbani emancipates us (612:10). This changes everything.

Section V

Let us reiterate. Today, a Sant cannot replace Gurbani, the Guru, or the Panj Piyare, nor would a real Sant ever attempt to do so. Genuine Sikh Sant would claim to be only a Sikh and will kindle a desire in us so that we can be just like him, a true child of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Sant is the pinnacle of Sikh Panth.

If we continue to live as if this goal is unreachable and disregard seeking company of such Sikhs, then, either Gurbani has failed us or we have failed Gurbani. People tend to ignore the portions of Gurbani they cannot understand, or they derail them with some alternate meaning just because they lack faith in its simple and

straightforward meaning. How can we claim to be in Sat Sangat if we do not believe in, and anticipate, its outcome?

If we were truly in Sat Sangat, then, someone among us must be turning into a Sant every so often. Otherwise, we must be wrong somewhere. If we do not have this conviction in our heart, then, clearly we have a problem (881:13-19). Our faith in Gurbani is valid only if we have a yearning and a hope to meet a perfect Gursikh, sometime soon, within our lifetime. We need to anticipate it, and pray for it whenever we are in the Sangat (763:1-8). Gurbani is replete with Shabads saturated with this desire. They infuse vitality into the Sangat. If it were not so important, we would not have so many such Shabads.

Guru Ji promises that there is always a Sant living somewhere in this world (1429:9, 1204:5). Sant is our role model, a testimony to the ultimate triumph of the Guru. However, emergence of our role model rests upon our own desire to meet such a person. Gurbani kindles this desire in our heart. Sant is the living proof that it is possible, today, as always, to become God-conscious while living in this society. Gurbani exhorts

us, repeatedly, to have a yearning to see such perfect Gursikhs, just to assuage our doubts, if for no other purpose (810:13-17). Coming to Sangat with this desire is the road towards spiritual awakening.

Here is a Shabad, regarding the qualities of Sant (adapted from translation by Dr. Sant Singh Khalsa):

"Aasaa, Fifth Mehl: Twenty-four hours a day, they know the Lord to be near, they surrender to the Sweet Will of God. Only the One Name is the Support of the Saints, they consider themselves as dust of the feet of all. My brother, listen, to the conduct of the Saints, their greatness cannot be described. Pause. They trade only the Name of the Lord. They are the vision of bliss, Kirtan, the Praise of the Lord, is their repose. Friends and enemies are same to them, They know of no other than God. They erase millions upon millions of sins, dispelling suffering; they give spiritual life to the soul. They are brave, men of their word. The Saints have enticed Maya herself. Even the gods and the angels seek their company. Blessed is their Darshan, and fruitful is their service. With my palms pressed together, Nanak offers his prayer: O Lord, Treasure of

Excellence, please bless me with the service of the Saints." (392:13-18)

Disregard of this sacred term cannot protect us from the charlatans. It only promotes ignorance and certain superficiality. This creates a spiritual void among the Sikh masses and thus, it makes them vulnerable to individuals who claim to be a Saint or a Guru. As a result, while our congregations become anemic and ritualistic due to a deficiency in this vital component of Sat Sangat, many members become discouraged and leave to join some fervently misguided group away from the mainstream Sangat. A Sant would never allow this. It also results in attrition of our young members to various other spiritual and religious disciplines. Perhaps we expect too much from the masses. As Guru Ji has said, true seekers are rare souls.

Being a revolutionary, Guru Nanak introduced the remedy, a unique method to liberate us en masse: Sat Sangat generated with Gurbani, augmented with music and singing from the heart. Kirtan of GurShabd or God's Word, in Sadh Sangat can gradually, or instantly, convert ordinary masses into Saints (642:7). In Sangat, Gurbani uses the ordinary Sikhs joined to

sing Gurbani, to uplift each other, during the window of those elusive moments when the ego is silenced through Kirtan of Gurbani (1185:10).

Whenever two or more Sikhs, with faith in the miracle of Sangat, join and sing Gurbani, they are creating a Sadh Sangat. On the other hand, a multitude joined for singing Gurbani, but lacking faith in the outcome of Sangat, succeeds in creating only, a multitude singing Gurbani. Let us never confuse the two as the same.

It is amazing that even the faithless multitude gets blessed, with crumbs, falling from the feast enjoyed by those Gursikhs who cherish the Sangat and have a firm faith in its outcome. This is a miracle of Sat Sangat that everyone gets blessed by just being there (861:8, 493:2). Thus, in due course, an association with the Sangat is meant to spiritually awaken everyone.

Section VI

Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave us the formula: "Meditate upon the formless God, connect with the Shabad, and seek the glorious sight of the Khalsa." We need to follow this command thoroughly, with full faith and

conviction. We know from the Bani of the Tenth Master that the definition of Khalsa is no different than the definition of a Sant. A Sant in the Sikh Panth today would keep the Rehit prescribed by the tenth Master, would dislike being called a Sant or a Guru, and would never lead the Sikhs away from mainstream Sangat into some eccentric group. These are some important qualities of a perfect Gursikh. Sangat of Guru Khalsa or such perfect Sikhs, and submitting to the Panj Piyare is the foundation of Sikh Panth.

In conclusion, here is an excerpt, from 'Anmol Bachan' compiled by Surjit Kaur Gandhi, pp. 54-55. Once Sri Naranjan Singh Ji was asked, what is the definition of a perfect soul? His reply is translated as follows:

"Perfect person is he who has the power to change the circumstances, the direction of events, but does not change because of the circumstances. Brahmgyani's words are more powerful than millions of soldiers. A Brahmgyani's word does not go to waste, as Guru Ji says, 'Sadhu's word is eternal' (1204:6). A perfect soul's command cannot be reversed here nor it can be reversed in heaven. Perfect souls can endure what

would be otherwise impossible. They give hints, but do not tell their secrets.

"A Brahmgyani, A perfect person's eyes sprinkle Amrit. Hearts that have been on fire are pacified. Their vision removes doubts and answers all questions. Their sight is peace giving and the mind comes to rest. Disturbance is replaced with Smadhi, poison is replaced with Amrit, and the tenth gate is opened. Perfect souls teach only Gurmat. They dispel darkness within our mind.

"We must sustain perfect faith. If our faith is deficient then, there can be no knowledge or spiritual light. 'Those who did not know how to love, fall by the wayside' (1425:2) Perfect souls know other people's thoughts. God Himself is present with a perfect soul. This is not a secret. There is no trick involved here. 'He has placed Himself in the true Guru. This is declared openly' (466:8)

"Once, during the Katha of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Sant Ji said that a perfect soul's feet become spiritually alive. Dead used to wake up after being touched by Baba Amardas Ji's feet. Perfect beings live in gratitude. Their words are for everyone, in the entire world. Sant Attar

Singh Ji used to say that Darshan is governed by the word (obeying the command). Seeing Akaal Purakh is having Darshan of the Guru. 'Gurmukh is in the Divine Sound and in the Vedas. Gurmukh is all pervading.' (2:8)

"Time, space, and causation become nonexistent in the presence of a Perfect soul. 'My friends are only those, whose mere sight banishes my ignorance' (520:8) 'They are found standing where the accounts are being settled' (529:3) Such souls weigh every word seriously before uttering it. They are solemn, fathomless, and deep thinkers. They are the Sun of knowledge. Their personality is like the sea. Just as one cannot fathom the sea, one cannot fathom them either. Mahapurush have the experience of Gurmat. 'He, in whose heart Nirankar has taken residence, the entire world is delivered through his teaching' (269:9)" ~ End of excerpt

Saints are the only humans that are truly alive in this world. The rest of us make up the bulk of Sikh Panth. Their company enlivens us (e.g., p. 881). Sant is the lifeblood on Panth. God hides Himself in a Sant's heart (718:11). Guru Ji says, "The sole purpose of a Jan (Sant)

coming into this world is that we remember Naam in their company" (295:1).

References: Sri Guru Granth Sahib.॥

Here is a link to read the references:॥

<http://www.sikhnet.com/siggs/translation/0001.html>

Please forgive my mistakes.

Yuktanand Singh॥Saline, Michigan

Summary

These days, we have the Shabad as our Guru, but we seem to be losing the art of Sadh Sangat. So, here is an article on this difficult and touchy subject. I have been reluctant to post it because I do not have the time to keep up with discussions. Also, I find myself quite inadequate, just like a fish trying to climb up a tree. But, considering the continued confusion and controversy generated by the so-called saints sprouting everywhere, I have decided to post it.

This article is divided into six sections. It is difficult to be cognizant of various contentions and still keep it short and free of redundancy. An effort is made to keep it within the tenets of Gurmat. Please offer correction of mistakes. Because of its length, here is a summary of what is in the full version:

Section I

An introduction to why meeting a Gurmukh is so important and what is the significance of Sat Sangat. In Gurbani, Sangat is listed as essential to living normal life as a human. Sat Sangat is just as important as reading Gurbani, because it transforms our heart so that we can truly understand the message of Gurbani.

Is the Sangat working for us in this sense? If not, why not? Do we understand what Sat Sangat means? Does a crowd of people like us represent Sat Sangat? Does the company of others just like us, adequately fulfill all the conditions of being in the Sadh Sangat? In other words, what is the role of a Sadh or a Sant in Sikh Panth?

Section II

The meaning of Sadh or Sant: A Sikh Saint or Sant is someone who has achieved spiritual perfection and mastery over the personal self through Guru's mercy. A Sant is an extremely rare soul. But this should not discourage us, confuse us, or cloud our understanding that Sant is the model of a perfect Sikh, the person that Gurbani urges us to become. A Sant is someone who is

devoted only to God and always lives in God's presence.

In an apparent effort to save us from the charlatans, our scholars shroud and suppress our need to adore perfect Gursikhs as our role models, by distorting the meaning in Gurbani. However, the institution of Sangat, the Panj Piyare, and the rules of the Khalsa Panth, eliminate all danger from impostors.

Those who claim to be a Guru or a Sant, leading the Sikhs away from mainstream Panth, are the ones we need to worry about. Additionally, we must avoid those teachers who disregard the Rehit prescribed by the tenth Master. Today's Sikh Sant is a Gursikh who keeps the Rehit of Khalsa, and someone who would not lead people into joining a 'Jatha' or a 'Dera' and thus, would not engage in fragmentation of the mainstream Sangat.

Section III

How is a Sant produced? We stay oblivious towards the essence, being busy all our life mistaking the shell for the kernel. Except for that rare individual called Sant,

we all vacillate, and thus, we remain imperfect and keep falling off the path. Those rare individuals who seek the kernel, the essence, and through Guru's mercy, never turn their attention away from it, become perfect and they are known as a Sant. Being in dust from the feet of Sat Sangat, we can learn how to maintain a balance on this path.

Judging by the numerous references to Sant it should be obvious to us that an insight into its meaning, and more importantly, its application is absolutely vital to our understanding of Gurmat and to succeed as a Sikh. The terms, Sikh, Gursikh, Brahmgyani, Gurmukh, Jan or HariJan, Mahapurush, Sadh, and Sant, are the names given to Sikhs at various spiritual stages. The Sant is a sacred and supreme state recognized within the Panth.

Section IV

How do we find a Sant? Since the establishment of Sat Sangat, we no longer wander in search of such an individual and we no longer follow someone who claims to be a Sant. Sadh Sangat is the place to be.

Nevertheless, we must have a burning desire to be uplifted through company of such Gursikhs.

Before we can solve our internal problems, we need to remedy our lack of faith in the Panth, its garden, Sat Sangat, and its fruit, the Sant. We may sing and read Gurbani all our life, but without faith, our inner progress remains stunted.

We must help each other in the Sangat by being absorbed in Gurbani with a sincere desire to be uplifted by the Sangat. Sadh Sangat or company of perfect Sikhs is essential. Just as, one lamp lights another. But there is no need to worship such Sikhs. The mere sight of a Sant is uplifting. But first, we need that burning desire to see them. Only then, can we benefit from their company or recognize them.

Section V

If we continue to live as if this goal is unreachable and disregard seeking company of such Sikhs, then, either Gurbani has failed us or we have failed Gurbani. Our faith in Gurbani is valid only if we have a yearning and a hope to meet a perfect Gursikh, sometime soon,

within our lifetime. Guru Ji promises that there is always a Sant living somewhere in this world.

Sant is our role model, a testimony to the ultimate triumph of the Guru. Coming to Sangat with a desire to see such a Gursikh is the road towards spiritual awakening. The Shabads regarding the qualities of Sant, as one example given, should be studied carefully.

Guru Nanak introduced a unique method to liberate us en masse: Sat Sangat generated with Gurbani, augmented with music and singing from the heart. Kirtan of GurShabd or God's Word, in Sadh Sangat can gradually, or instantly, convert ordinary masses into Saints. However, a multitude joined for singing Gurbani, but lacking faith in the outcome of Sangat, succeeds in creating only, a multitude singing Gurbani. Let us never confuse the two as the same.

Section VI

The formula: "Meditate upon the formless God, connect with the Shabad, and seek the glorious sight of the Khalsa" needs to be followed thoroughly, with

full faith and conviction. A Sant in the Sikh Panth today would keep the Rehit prescribed by the tenth Master, would dislike being called a Sant or a Guru, and would never lead the Sikhs away from mainstream Sangat into some eccentric group.

These are some important qualities of a perfect Gursikh. Sangat of Guru Khalsa or such perfect Sikhs, and submitting to the Panj Piyare is the foundation of Sikh Panth. Spiritual words of Sri Naranjan Singh Ji on this subject are recorded in this section.

Saints are the only humans truly alive in this world. The rest of us make up the bulk of Sikh Panth. Their company enlivens us. Sant is the lifeblood on Panth. God hides Himself in a Sant's heart. Guru Ji says, "The sole purpose of a Sant coming into this world is that we remember Naam in their company."

End of summary

Yuktanand Singh ¶ Saline, Michigan

yasingh@concentric.net

11/16/2001